

Area North Committee – 24th October 2007

10. Active Communities Programme

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Purpose of the Report

To update Area North committee members on the Active Community Programme running in Area North led by the Community Activity and Lifestyles Team from South Somerset District Council.

Recommendation

Members are invited to comment on the report.

Aims

- Increase activity levels of Area North residents by providing access to leisure activities within the community
- To work with activity champions within communities to develop sustainable and cost free activity i.e. Health Walks.
- Raising awareness of healthy lifestyles

Background

The contribution that physical activity and active recreation can make towards health and well being became widely recognised in 2004/5 following the publication of the Chief Medical Officers Report and Choosing Health: Making Healthier Choices Easier.

The SSDC Sport and Active Leisure Strategy 2006-2012 responded to this new national agenda by committing the council to support the development of active lifestyles. This involves providing active leisure opportunities close to where people live and work which are fun, enjoyable, fulfilling and beneficial. It aims to overcome the three principal barriers in South Somerset: increased pressure on time, restricted rural access to transport and facilities, and cost. This area is about delivering activity within local communities in order to make access easier.

In order to achieve this, the department created a dedicated district wide Active Lifestyles Team, in partnership with the South Somerset Primary Care Trust, which became operational in October 2005 to strategically lead and co-ordinate the development of active lifestyles programmes across the district. It has devised a completely new range of services specially to meet the needs of the community in this area in 2007/08.

Since March 2006 the Community Activity and Lifestyles Team have been working towards developing active lifestyle opportunities in Somerton, Langport and Martock.

Area North Statistics

On average 80% of people do not use Sport and Leisure facilities. The reasons for these not being utilised include:

- Not being aware of the facility
- Having to travel too far
- Cost implications
- Not wanting to exercise/do an activity on their own
- Intimidated
- Not mobile

(Statistics obtained from the National Survey)

There was also a perceived lack of activities of 15-25 year olds and 60+ age groups.

Report

Since April 2007 the CAL team has been undertaking a number of initiatives in the above areas including health fairs, training volunteers and setting up new exercise sessions.

The areas were chosen working in partnership with the Area North Community Development team, communities were identified based on a number of factors including levels of deprivation, needs expressed within parish plans, ease of access to leisure facilities. Working with the community development staff ensured decisions were based on local knowledge of where the greatest need existed. The listed communities are in no way exclusive however, and Active Community work has been undertaken in other areas where community groups have requested support including a Health Fair and Health Walks in South Petherton and a health day at Curry Rivel.

Achievements to date include:

- A Health Fair and health-testing day in Somerton, Martock, Langport and Curry Rivel. Tests were free and included Blood Pressure, Blood Glucose and Body Fat %. A total of 200 people attended these events. Approximately 1 in 3 people tested presented with results that may negatively affect their health. Where appropriate, the Active Lifestyles Team were able to offer individuals lifestyle advice on weight loss and becoming more physically active and where appropriate, advised to go and see their GP.

Case Study: A female resident in Somerton received a Blood Glucose check as part of the Health Fair held there. The result was very high and she was advised to see her GP. Her GP diagnosed diabetes. The lady was only in her 30's and was looking after 2 children. Now she has been diagnosed and receiving treatment accordingly, her quality of life has improved. She told the team she would never have been checked if it had not been for the test that day.

- Health Walk promotion around the whole of Area North. 4 Health Walk Leader training days per year with a guaranteed training day in Area North. Distribution of the areas walks and contacts for setting up new walks with the Health walk Co-ordinator in South Somerset.
- 10 Flexercise leaders qualified, average 150 residents of Area North exercising in sheltered housing per week – 30% of those trained Flexercise leaders have attended update workshops to improve their skills and knowledge and share good practice and network with other leaders.

- A Tai Chi class set up in Langport utilising the Great Bow Yard development and working in partnership with Langport Area Development Trust (LADT).
- Working in partnership with Huish Episcopi Sports Centre in starting up a COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) class to enable more residents to access the facilities for treatment of chronic bronchitis or emphysema under a supervised instructor in a safe environment. (Start date to be confirmed)
- Supported Stanchester Sports Centre in the development of their GP Referral portfolio and hope that they will become recognised in the coming weeks.
- Worked in conjunction with South Petherton GP Surgery and South Petherton Parish Council - we held a Health Fair at the surgery, we offered free health MOT's and health and nutritional advice, and where to participate in activities locally.
- Free Health MOT's in conjunction with Area Development's 'Afternoon Tea' in March in Somerton, Langport and Curry Rivel, including body fat percentage, fitness testing, peak flow, height and weight – referred 8 people to their GP for further investigation after their tests.
- Creation of Martock Surgery Health Walks with an average of 18 walkers per session.
- Creation of a Health Walks DVD documenting some of the walks undertaken by health walkers from Stoke, Martock and South Petherton – very successful over the last year with an average of 30 –35 walkers per Health Walk.
- Martock Health Walk and Bowls afternoon in conjunction with Martock Short Mat Bowls Club.
- Time out Together Youth Bus in Martock had a good turn out of 14 children, even with a very wet day!
- Partnerships for Older People Project (POPP) Health Day in Langport (18 people tested and 6 referred to their GP for further investigation)
- 44 clients referred to the ProActive scheme at Huish Episcopi Sports Centre in the last year, 80% completed the 12-week programme, 5% did not complete and 15% are still attending. From the twelve-month monitoring forms that clients send back to us, 75% of clients that finished the scheme last year are still doing some form of physical activity or exercise.

Stoke Update

Following on from the Committee report last year on Stoke Sub Hamdon, I am pleased to report that all activities that were set up are still running and have proven sustainable. Stoke Walking group has on average 28-30 walkers per session and they have gone on to create a DVD of their walks throughout the year!

It is the practice for the CAL team to regularly update the members on how the Active Communities Programme has worked in their Area.

Financial Implications

At present the projects are funded through the Active Communities budget from the Sport, Art and Leisure Service. Each area (Somerton, Langport and Martock) has £1,000 allocated for the Active Communities programme from April 2007-April 2008, future expansion and continuation of the Active Communities projects will be dependant on sourcing external funding.

Implications for Corporate Priorities

The work of the Sport and Leisure Service supports the District Council's corporate priority:

- Improve the health and well-being of our citizens

This programme supports the development of Active Communities, Ensuring that more activity is delivered within local communities in order to enhance access. Targets are twenty communities across South Somerset by 2012.

The report has outlined the key short-term health benefits in the Active Communities programme, however it is not possible to report on the long-term benefits yet as it is too soon to have had an effect.

Background Papers: *Report to Area North Committee – November 2006*
